

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Knights of Pythias Building and Theatre

AND/OR COMMON

K. of P. Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

215 North Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Greensburg

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

9th

STATE

Indiana

— VICINITY OF

CODE

018

COUNTY

Decatur

CODE

031

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☒ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Knight's of Pythias Lodge #148

STREET & NUMBER

215 North Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Greensburg

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Indiana

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Decatur County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Greensburg

STATE

Indiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Knights of Pythias Building is a late nineteenth Italianate commercial structure located at 215 North Broadway, just off the Courthouse Square in Greensburg, Indiana.

The portion of the structure facing Broadway is a three story building of St. Louis press brick, constructed in 1899. The first story windows and doors have been extensively altered; aluminum siding, new windows, and new doors were installed about fifteen years ago. There are three entrances across the front; the center doors provide access to the lodge rooms on the second and third stories, while the flanking entrances open into rooms which have been used as stores and a restaurant. Three small modern signs project from various portions of the first and second stories.

The interior houses a lodge recreation room and offices on the second floor and the lodge hall on the third level. The exterior facade has six bays across the second and third stories. These double-hung windows have Bedford Limestone sills with keystone heads on the second level and stepped heads on the third level.

At the top center of the parapet wall between a plain molding and a cornice with brackets and dentils is a plaque inscribed, "K. P. Building." The bracketed cornice is the primary feature which suggests the Italianate style.

The north side of the lodge building has three brick chimneys with limestone caps. There are seven windows and fire doors on the second and third stories. The ground floor has three windows and three doors. There are three fire escapes across this side of the building.

In 1908 a theatre was added to the rear and side of the lodge building. This is a four story brick structure on a low limestone foundation. The walls are plain except for shallow brick pilasters. The major exterior alteration of this structure has been the addition of some louvers at the rear of the building.

The exterior of the theatre has a main floor, two balconies, an orchestra pit, and dressing rooms under the stage. The balconies curve to match the design of the proscenium arch and footlights. Many of the interior features are original; although some of the balcony seats have been replaced, the seats on the main floor are unchanged. The first floor seats 341 while the balconies together contain places for about 350 people. Ionic columns and other classical features in the door moldings and elsewhere suggest a neo-classic revival influence.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1899, 1908

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Colonel Wood

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Knights of Pythias Building and Theatre is significant mainly for social/humanitarian reasons; a testimonial to the vital role that fraternal lodges and theatres played in rural America before the advent of radio and television altered the social life of small towns.

Lodge #148 of the Knights of Pythias was founded in Greensburg's Red Men's Building on August 24, 1886, twenty years after the fraternal order was first organized in Washington, D.C., and seventeen years after the first lodge was founded in Indiana at Indianapolis. By the time that the Greensburg lodge was established, the K. of P. was the most numerous and respectable secret order in Indiana, excepting the Masons and Odd Fellows. Five years after the Greensburg lodge started, it moved to 215 North Broadway, and the present building was constructed in 1899 at a cost of \$12,000. No doubt the growth of the lodge benefited from the greatest single decade of population growth in Greensburg from 1890 to 1900. When the building was dedicated on November 2, 1899, the town had about five thousand residents.

The order continued to prosper and decided in 1908 to add the theatre to the existing building as a civic project. A Colonel Wood, who designed several Midwest theatres, was selected as the architect while the local contractors were Clardy and Tumilty. To help finance the addition, the K. of P. Building sold advance tickets for the opening night. The response, which brought in over \$7,000 for tickets that ranged in price from five to twenty-five dollars, was an example of community self-reliance that predated the era of massive federal grants to local communities.

The Theatre opened on March 25, 1908, with a musical comedy, "The Girl Question," starring Paul Nicholson, who played to 900 people in a hall that had only 700 seats.

Through the years, the theatre hosted a variety of types of entertainment. Although some Shakespearean players trod the boards, the theatre was intended mainly for lighter stage productions. The town enjoyed a number of theatrical troupes which were also booked in Cincinnati and Indianapolis. Some, like the Orphean Stock Company, returned several times during a single year. Minstrels, vaudeville, and local talent shows continued to make use of the elaborate rigging and lights even after 1910, when movies were first shown, and after 1923, when a screen and projection booth were added.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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The Knights of Pythias Theatre served as a focal point for all sorts of community activity until displaced by larger civic facilities such as the YMCA in 1915 and a combination gymnasium and assembly hall in 1927. On October 30, 1908, Vice-President Charles W. Fairbank addressed a political rally of some 1,200 people at the theatre.

As late as 1927 Greensburg boasted the largest K. of P. Lodge in the country for a town of its size - a remarkable achievement at a time when the town had only 6,000 inhabitants and at least ten national fraternal orders. The K. of P. remained viable even through the depression and on December 20, 1935, held a ceremony to burn the mortgage on the theatre. By the mid-1950's times had changed, and the K. of P. was in decline all over the state. Greensburg had two other theatres showing films. In 1958 the K. of P. Theatre closed and has remained unused except for two summers when local talent used it for theatrical productions.

As a local example of the Italianate Commercial architecture, the K. of P. Building is important to Greensburg, especially since a major fire in 1952 destroyed much of the town business district. However, the structure is more important locally as a past theatre, community center, and home of a fraternal society which dates from an age when small town residents relied on themselves for their social life.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Harding, Lewis A., Ed. History of Decatur County, Indiana, Its People, Industries, and Institutions. Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Company, Inc., 1915
Greensburg News, April 1, 1908
Greensburg Standard, March 27 and November 6, 1908
Greensburg Daily News, June 8, 1959

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 6	6, 3, 0, 5, 9, 0	4, 3, 5, 5, 1, 9, 0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
C				D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Van P. Batterton, President

ORGANIZATION

Decatur County Historical Society

DATE

December 29, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

525 North Broadway

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Greensburg

STATE

Indiana

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ☐

STATE ☐

LOCAL ☒

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 2-9-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER